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ABSTRACT

This document discusses the treatment of Arabs in the western media. The main portion concentrates on the image of Arabs presented in American novels. Because television and films present visual images that communicate a powerful message in a matter of seconds, stereotyping appears as a shorthand form of communication and is, to a certain extent, inherent in the nature of the media. In novels, however, a much greater degree of racism is possible because of the deep intimacy formed between the writer and the reader. In addition, in writing, authors do not feel the same compunction to curb ethnic slurs or blatantly racist and distorted views of Arabs as that felt by writers for television and films. Blatant stereotyping of Arabs in writing is attributable to two reasons: (1) lengthy description required to make a powerful impact on the reader prevents the underlying message from being easily disguised, and (2) the history of writing on the Middle East finds its roots in the Orientalist tradition and, as such, is characterized by an attitude and tone of cultural superiority and racism. Novels about Arabs usually fit into one of two categories: (1) thrillers, spy stories, and intrigues; and (2) historical novels, romances, and adventure novels. The plots of both categories tend to deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab-Israeli conflict, global disasters, and Islamic fundamentalism. Of the five novels discussed, two present a relatively accurate portrayal of Palestinians, although even these describe Arabs as preoccupied with violence and sex. (DK)

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sex, lies & stereotypes

The Image of Arabs in American Popular Fiction

By Suha J. Sabbagh

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4201 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20008 (202) 244-2990

James G. Abourezk
Chairman

Abdeen M. Jabara
President

Barbara Shahin Batlouni
Executive Director

Ann Talamas
Director of Publications

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ADC serves its nationwide membership through direct advocacy in cases of defamation, through legal action in cases of discrimination, and through counseling in matters of immigration. The ADC Research Institute publishes information on matters of concern to Arab-Americans and provides educational materials on Arab history and culture as well as the ethnic experiences of Arabs in the United States. The Research Institute also sponsors summer internships in Washington for Arab-American college students. ADC's Women's and Children's Fund addresses the humanitarian needs of victims of violence in the Middle East.

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sex, lies & stereotypes

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Introduction

What do most Americans think when they hear the word "Arab"? Some time ago, before various civil rights groups sensitized the American TV viewer to the concept of negative ethnic stereotyping, it was a lot easier to answer this question than it is now. In the early 1980s, when the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee was investing most of its efforts fighting the negative stereotyping of Arabs in advertisements and on television, the image of the Arab as a camel jockey, a terrorist, or a filthy rich sheik was clear and easily defined. Since then, the stereotype of the Arab has become less blatant, losing some of its innocence; yet it has not lost its malicious message. There are fewer scenes now that openly depict the Arab as a lascivious sheik languishing in Hollywood harems. The image of the Arab as a sex maniac has not subsided or changed, however, but the message now is put across in a more subtle manner. Arab-Americans have benefited in a very limited sense from the greater sensitivity of the viewer towards negative ethnic stereotyping, although the overall image of the Arab has not witnessed any noteworthy transformations.

A new and more positive image of the Arab in the popular media is needed to replace the extremely negative one that currently prevails. So far, not a single entertainment program has featured an Arab in a positive role, although a number of programs now depict other minorities in a more tolerable way. What the popular media seem to project is a more simplified Arab stereotype, but its nature does not reflect a greater sense of sympathy to or understanding of Arabs. The civil rights movement, which produced the women's movement and the black movement in this country, can also be credited with creating a greater sensitivity in the viewer towards negative ethnic stereotyping.[1] Consequently, the viewer's tolerance for ethnic slurs has diminished somewhat. Yet, no ethnic stereotype is as pejorative as that of the Arab and not a single eth-

nic community has been the target of a more racist diatribe in recent years.

At a time when the media's portrayal of blacks, women, and other minorities is making some serious strides, their depiction of the Arab is now a bit more subtle but no less racist. The Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran hostage crisis, and the relationship of the United States with Libya—now topics for television dramas—have come to replace the erotic Orientalist view of the Middle East. The perception of the Arab as a violent, barbaric, sexual maniac continues unchallenged.

Arab stereotyping is not limited to the entertainment field; it also permeates the news media. In examining the biases of the news media in the United States, Edmund Ghareeb writes, "One wonders how the stereotype of the Arab is so pervasive in the most highly educated, elaborately informed nation in the world, possessing the most effective media apparatus anywhere."[2]

In part only, the answer lies in the fact that stereotyping constitutes a very convenient way of putting across a certain message in shorthand form. According to Ghareeb, "Limits of time and space pressure journalists to use this shorthand in identifying individuals, groups or causes. This means of identification, however, usually does not reflect the reality of the situation or the qualities of the individuals and groups being covered."[3]

To some extent, stereotyping is inherent in the nature of the media. To save time, symbols are employed to convey a loaded message. Along similar lines, Jack G. Shaheen, the most outspoken critic of Arab stereotyping on television, argues that an Arab headdress, for example, serves as an "instant TV Arab kit," giving the producer, who knows very little about Arabs, the opportunity to present a packaged image that reinforces what the viewer already knows about Arabs through the media. But, neither Ghareeb nor Shaheen claim that this practice constitutes a fully satisfactory explanation for both the nature of the stereotype or the

reasons for its emergence in the first place. For some answers to questions related to the nature of the stereotype, one has to examine American cultural biases toward and perceptions of the Arab world.[4]

Contrary to what one may think, television plays a far more limited role in perpetuating the stereotype of the Arab than does the popular novel. Because of the deep intimacy formed between the writer and the reader, a much greater degree of racism is possible in the novel than in television and film, where the ethnic sensitization process has had a more direct and immediate impact. In fictional writing, the Arab world is openly discussed as a place filled with Islamic fanatics, terrorists, sex maniacs, and affluent but totally uncultured individuals. Here, the stereotype of the Arab is more blatant and complex. Novels like Leon Uris' *The Haj*,[5] presumably a historical account of the Arab-Israeli problem, portray the Palestinian[6] as a backward tribal being whose motives to destroy the state of Israel are attributed to a longstanding vendetta that Arabs harbor towards Jews. The Palestinian is also described as dirty, vindictive, deceptive, and given to all kinds of sexual excesses and violence. To be sure, this degree of anti-Arab sentiment would never be tolerated on television. In writing, however, authors do not feel the same compunction to curb ethnic slurs or blatantly racist and distorted views of Arabs. They assume a much greater degree of freedom in indulging their stereotype of the Arab than would be possible or permissible in television or film.

Two additional factors have contributed to the unabashed stereotyping of Arabs in writing. First, unlike television, the novel does not lend itself well to a shorthand form of communication. A commando outfit on a dark-skinned male can communicate a powerful message to the viewer in a matter of seconds—the image of an Arab terrorist. It saves the producer the effort of trying to convey the same message in a more complicated way. But the same idea conveyed in writing requires a lengthy description in order to make a comparable impact on the reader. Consequently,

in writing the underlying message is not as easily disguised. The novel, therefore, provides an excellent arena in which to investigate the image of the Arab.

Second, the reason stereotyping seems to be more freely practiced in novels than on television is due to the history of writing on the Middle East. Present-day popular literature about the Arab world has its roots in a tradition which began with the Europeans who visited the Orient during the eighteenth century and returned home to write about their experiences. The "Orientalist tradition," as it is called, is characterized primarily by an attitude and a tone of cultural superiority and racism.

Although most authors now focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict instead of the harem-filled days of early Orientalist writings, the nature of the message regarding Arabs has not changed. The Arabs are still perceived as sexual beings who are closer in many ways to the animal kingdom. Arabs are judged by moral and behavioral standards established by Western culture and are found to be deficient. Very few writers, if any, try to understand the norms and values that constitute Arab society and set it apart from others. Instead, Arab values are discussed in a way that relegates them to a position of inferiority in comparison to the values of the West. Because the novels emerge out of a literary tradition in which the Arab consistently has been vilified, writers and most readers are jaded to the negative stereotyping. The writer is limited only by what the reader is willing to believe about Arabs, and the reader's willingness to accept what is said seems to have no bounds.

For these reasons, the popular novel provides a fertile ground for propagating Arab stereotypes; therefore, any discussion of the image of the Arab in American culture must include a study of this medium. The conclusions of the current study are based on novels produced in the United States over the last decade. Due to limitations of space, this paper deals in depth with five novels selected not on the basis of their literary merit, but rather as representative samples of genres and topics.

Plot and Character

Novels about Arabs may be divided roughly into two categories. The first, representing by far the greater majority, consists of so-called thrillers, spy stories, political and international intrigues, and nuclear disasters. The term "thriller" mentioned on the cover communicates to the reader a fast-moving plot with the obligatory scenes of sex and violence. The second category consists of historical accounts, romances, and adventure novels. The plots of both categories deal with three main topics: the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Arab-Israeli conflict; global atomic or financial disasters originating in the Middle East; and the excesses of Islamic fundamentalism (the latter of which accounts for about ninety percent of all novels). Once a plausible situation has been established, a situation known to and accepted by the reader—such as Kaddafi's desire to obtain the atomic bomb—there are no limits in the extent to which the reader is expected to suspend his or her belief in reality and accept fiction for fact. The novelist's point of departure is almost always based on an event in the real world, which makes it easier for the reader to accept the "unreal" portrayal of Arabs.

Of the five novels that I have chosen to discuss in this paper, four belong to the first category described above. Two of these are spy stories and two are thrillers. The spy stories include John Le Carre's *The Little Drummer Girl*[7] and David Ignatius' *Agents of Innocence*.[8] Both plots deal with the relationship between the Mossad (Israel's intelligence organization) and the PLO, and are based on the lives of actual Palestinian fighters. Le Carre's contribution lies in his ability to portray the Palestinian position somewhat accurately and to allow the reader to be the judge. Nevertheless, the two Palestinians in *The Little Drummer Girl* remain stereotyped and the reader is not able to establish any rapport with them.[9]

The character of the protagonist in *Agents of Innocence* is based on the life of Hassan Salameh, a Palestinian fighter who served as the liaison between the PLO and the CIA and was killed

by an Israeli car bomb in 1979. Although the novel is not free of racial slurs, it is one of the few novels in which a Palestinian transcends stereotyping and comes close to being a fully developed character. These novels are discussed here because both contribute to the portrayal of the Palestinian in terms that are relatively accurate.

The two thrillers that I have chosen to discuss are *A Talk With the Angels* by Desmond Meiring,[10] a novel concerning the excesses of Muslim extremism in Egypt, and *Hunter*, by Jere Maudsley,[11] a "What if Kaddafi gets the bomb?" type of thriller. These novels were chosen because they represent a sample of novels on Islamic fundamentalism and near disasters set off by the Arab world. The appeal of these novels is based on a fascination with violence. Although Meiring capitalizes on the excesses of Islamic fundamentalism in constructing his scenes of violence, he does attempt to make a distinction between Arab moderates and extremists. The monolithic view of Islam so prevalent in other thrillers is somewhat challenged here. In addition, Meiring has researched some of the teachings of Islamic fundamentalists, so his work is considered a cross between a thriller and an historical novel. In Maudsley's novels, all Arab characters, including Kaddafi and his assistants (Saudis and others), are portrayed as bloodthirsty and crazed killers. He presents all Arabs as unscrupulous and stupid—a people who delight in killing friends whose usefulness has expired. The instincts of the reader are manipulated into believing that Maudsley's work is a thriller that merits further discussion. In reality, however, the novel seeks to misinform the reader about Arabs in general and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular.

The prototype for most novels in this second category is *Exodus*, by Leon Uris.[12] This novel has triggered a glut of writings in which Israel is portrayed as a beleaguered nation struggling for survival against all odds. These include James Michener's *The Source* (1978) and a number of lesser known novels such as Gloria Goldreich's *This Burning Harvest* and Clive Irving's *Promise The*

Earth, both published in 1983. Although Irving's work does not come close to denigrating Arabs to the extent one finds in *The Haj* or in Goldreich's novel, the author nevertheless refuses to address the dispossession of the Palestinians. In this respect Irving is close to Uris. Kathleen Christison has written about this trend: "Irving has too easily fallen into the pattern of other writers on the Middle East—a tendency to regard the Palestinians as invisible before 1948, to write them off as having made no attempt to direct their own destiny before Palestine was partitioned."[13] This tendency to refuse to consider Palestinians as a people with a national identity, rather than as a few extended families or tribes, informs most historical novels. It is quite astonishing to see that the very objective of these so-called historical novels is precisely to remove the Palestinians from the historical process and, by the same token, relegate the Arab-Israeli dispute to a problem that has its source in the tribal nature of Arabs and not the events that led to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has also made its debut in romance novels. Several Israeli authors who are published in the United States have written about love relationships between Arabs and Jews (many of these novels have been translated from Hebrew). The authors seem to be genuinely groping with existential problems, but the Arab stereotype is not markedly different from that in other novels. In these works, the love relationships almost always fail because of the cultural backwardness of the Arab who is unable to comprehend the values of a more advanced society.

For example, the plot of *Holy Land Holy War* (1979), by Isaac Yetiv,[14] deals with the relationship between a Sephardic Jew and an Arab woman. Abandoned as a baby by her family, which fled the country in 1948, she is raised by a Jewish couple, survivors of the Holocaust, who change her name from Jihada, meaning "holy war" in Arabic, to Shlomit, meaning "peace" in Hebrew. The novel deals with issues of identity and the denigration of the Sephardim in Israeli society. Yetiv is very critical of the discrimination against Sephardim in Israel which, he argues, is based on the fact

that the Sephardim come from an Arab culture, considered inferior in Israel to European culture. He should be congratulated for making this point; however, Yetiv fails to apply the same standard to his own treatment of Arabs in this novel that he seeks for Sephardim. The Arab natives, when they do appear, are portrayed as a mob, and are given a submissive character. Yetiv doesn't seem to realize that the Sephardim cannot achieve equality and equal treatment as long as the Arab continues to be denigrated in Israel, and as long as the Palestinian problem remains unsolved.

I have also chosen to discuss *The Haj*, a historical novel dealing with the Palestine problem, due to the strong acclaim that the book has received in the marketplace. Leon Uris systematically defends all the right-wing Zionist arguments surrounding the dispersal of Palestinians in 1948: the Palestinians left the country because they feared the violence of the advancing Arab armies and not the violence perpetrated by the Jewish underground, Irgun and the Hagana. The result is a highly propagandistic work which is Manichaean in its presentation of good versus evil. The Arab is everything that the Israeli is not. He is cruel to the weak, especially to women and children, and his sexual appetite is almost bestial. Arab men are totally selfish, crude, and show no consideration for a woman's feelings. Arab women do not fare much better; they are all plotters against their husbands and they encourage their children to steal from them. In addition to being ignorant and adhering to a backward religion, Arab men and women are always described in a manner which suggests that their Israeli counterparts are both morally and intellectually superior. The Jewish kibbutz dweller is consistently described as gentle, intelligent, and scientific-minded.

Certain differences emerge when *The Haj* is compared with Le Carre's *The Little Drummer Girl* or Ignatius' *Agents of Innocence*. Although the two spy stories do not purport to be historical narratives, the stereotype of the Palestinian is understood against a background of historical conflict. *The Haj*, on the other hand, places the stereotype of the Palestinian outside the historical

process. The motives for the behavior of all Arabs in these novels is attributed to their tribal and primitive nature. In this way the Palestinian conflict is rendered marginal. The reader is led to believe that the Palestine problem is a cultural contest between a progressive Israel and a few backward tribes and that no political solution can bring about peace in the area. In contrast to *The Haj*, the stereotype of the Palestinian in the novels by Le Carre and Ignatius is more positive, if only because the Palestinian is not excluded from the historical process. Portrayed as a people dispossessed of their land, the Palestinians' actions are motivated by this profound historical predicament.

It is therefore possible to divide novels about the Arab world into two categories based on whether Arab behavior is explained within a historical context or on the basis of the tribal nature of Arabs. Although racist notions of Palestinians can be found in both types of novels, plots that place the Palestinian outside the historical process also deny a political solution to the problem. In this respect, the plots distort history and make resolution a totally secondary and marginal issue. In these novels Palestinians are born terrorists, in the same way that people are born blond and blue-eyed.

Novels about the Arab world may further be categorized on the basis of whether the Arab protagonist is perceived as a flat stereotype or as a more fully developed character. Novels that base Arab behavior in the context of history allow the image of the Arab a greater degree of flexibility. Since the historical conditions are subject to change, one can assume that the stereotype of the Arab will be less static, allowing for a degree of evolution in the character from the beginning to the end of the novel. On the other hand, stereotypes that base Arab or Palestinian behavior strictly on Islam or tribalism tend to be more static. Consequently, stereotyping is more prevalent and deeply rooted in novels that explain Arab behavior or the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of tribal relations.

Finally, I have found that authors depict roughly four images of Arabs, images that are very similar to those delineated in Jack Shaheen's study of Arab stereotyping in television:[15] Arabs are terrorists and violent people with a penchant for the easy life; Arabs are sexual maniacs; Arabs are backward and uncultured; and Arabs are wealthy, yet greedy, and have no moral scruples. In fiction, however, these images are presented more freely, in more detail, and with far less regard for the sensitivities of Arab-Americans.

A Cultural Perspective

The history of the stereotyping of Arabs in this country dates back to the first encounters between the European and the Arab worlds. Western attitudes towards the Middle East began to be formed at the time when Europe was becoming a colonial power; the way in which the Islamic world was allowed to filter into European consciousness very much reflects that relation of power. According to Edward Said, "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony."[16] Through an analysis that takes into consideration all the Orientalist discourse, Said has shown that the Arab performed the role of the "Other" against whom Europe established its superior identity. Orientalism as a discourse is based on the opposition between "us" Europeans and "those" non-Europeans. He writes, "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[17]

When the Oriental is described as backward, it is in relation to the European. This statement also implies that the European is more advanced and therefore superior. The same statement also reflects a relation of power and authority over the Arab, who is being discussed from the standpoint of European values and in comparison to European culture. Said argues that the control that Europe exerted over the Middle East from the time of the ascen-

dancy of Europe to power, but especially during the colonial period, is reflected in statements made about the Arabs by Orientalists. Based on Said's findings, it is possible to argue that the stereotype of the Arab as an inferior and pejorative character helps establish the positional superiority of American culture. Every negative Arab stereotype reflects the relative relationship of power between the United States and the Arab world.

Statements made about the Arabs in popular culture are legitimized by present and past statements made in the social sciences. Numerous works seek to explain the mental functions of the Arabs as if the Arab mind is different and therefore inferior to the Western mind. Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind*[18] and John Laffin's *The Arab Mind Considered: A Need for Understanding*[19] fall into that category. The authors' tone of authority suggests a sense of power and control that they both feel towards the Arab as a subject. Sania Hamady's *Temperament and Character of the Arabs*[20] falls into that category of books in which Arabs are perceived as a highly emotional people incapable of disciplined action. They are also depicted as inherently incapable of achieving organizational structure or cooperation.

Not all authors who write about the Arab world assume this superior attitude toward the Arabs and Islam. Maxime Rodinson and Jacques Berque are cited in Edward Said's study as two scholars who show a greater sensitivity towards the Arab world. Both are conscious of their methodological constraints and limitations and are constantly aware of the position of European writers in regard to their subject matter. Unfortunately, high school textbooks in the United States are based on the mainstream perceptions of Orientalism. An informative and disturbing study of the image of the Arab in American textbooks, conducted by Ayad al-Qazzaz,[21] shows that Arabs are the object of much greater slander than any other ethnic group in this country. The Arab world is portrayed as backward, lacking unity, and dominated entirely by a tribal mentality. Islam, in particular, is the target of a great number of writers who present Mohammed as an impostor. The Arab-Is-

raeli conflict constitutes another area replete with misinformation; the Arabs' hatred of Jews emerges not only as the reason for the conflict but as a unifying factor in the Arab world.

The Marketability of the Arab Stereotype

Arab stereotyping in popular novels is becoming increasingly profitable, especially for those writers who make it to the best-seller lists, such as Uris, Michener, and Le Carre. The field boasts an unusual number of bestsellers. According to Janice J. Terry,[22] who draws her conclusions strictly from the critical reception of *The Haj*, strong anti-Arab sentiments of the kind that one finds in this book are no longer acceptable to critics. She argues that despite the financial success of the novel and an aggressive marketing campaign, the novel was not well received by readers, especially when compared with the acceptance of *Exodus*. She proposes that critics can no longer tolerate this type of anti-Islamic and anti-Arab diatribe. While her point is well supported, the financial success of *The Haj* suggests that even though critics may be opposed to the negative stereotype of the Arab, the market is very receptive. And as anyone living in this country knows, it is the market that determines the acceptance of a certain product irrespective of what the critics say.

Having said this, however, one must not jump quickly to conclusions regarding the income generated by sales of novels about the Arab world. In terms of the total market for popular novels in this country, these sales constitute only a small amount.

In 1983, about 50,000 new books were published.[23] Novels based on the Middle East do not exceed twenty books per year; in terms of the overall picture these sales are minimal, and so are the financial returns for big companies like Doubleday. But the picture is different when judged from the point of view of the individual writer. For the author who makes it to the top of the bestseller list, the financial rewards are considerable.

In terms of sales, the number of books on the Middle East does not constitute a large percentage of the overall market. When it comes to assessing the damage done to Arab-Americans as a group, the sales figures in relation to the overall market are not terribly significant. What is important is that the stereotype may be perceived as a coded message that a dominant culture makes about another. The number of times that this message is repeated is less significant than the content of the message itself.

The message conveyed through the Arab stereotype is extremely vicious and denigrating. In the last decade, no ethnic group in this country has been more maligned than the Arabs. While other minority groups like blacks and women are making some serious strides to attain greater dignity, the image of Arabs in popular novels is undergoing a regressive form of metamorphosis. As the Palestine problem increases in intensity, one can assume that racial slurs against Arabs and their portrayal in fiction as subhumans will only increase. At this point there seems to be no alternative image to replace the current stereotype.

How does one even begin to remedy this situation? To a certain degree, all solutions short of a transformation in the power relationship that binds this country to the Arab world both politically and economically will bring only limited results. Nevertheless, it is still possible to make a contribution by offering an alternative view of the Arab world, one that is tied closely to the developments there. Cultural politics can become a powerful tool with which to combat this onslaught of anti-Arab defamation. The television viewer and the reader of popular fiction must be made aware that there exists a different Arab world than the one that finds its way into American homes.

As it now stands, American television entertainment programs are aired in the Arab world, but the reverse—the presentation of Arab cultural programs on American television—is not the case. On several occasions Edward Said has proposed that a cultural exchange program could be effective in introducing the American

viewer to Arab cultural programs. For example, Jordan holds an annual cultural festival in Jerash that draws entertainment troops from all over the world. The newly renovated Cairo Opera House hosts performances from abroad. These programs could be beamed back to the United States. The result would provide an alternative image of Arabs, although it would not eradicate overnight the existing stereotypes.

Chapter 1

The Little Drummer Girl
Friend or Enemy?

After *The Haj*, John Le Carre's *The Little Drummer Girl* sold more copies than any other novel about Arabs. First published in England, the novel immediately became a bestseller in the United States. Unlike *The Haj*, read primarily because it is the story of Arabs and Israelis, the objective here remains that of the good spy story equal in literary merit to Le Carre's other successes, *The Spy who Came in From the Cold* or *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. The Arab-Israeli conflict is the stage on which this spy tale unfolds; however, in this novel the Palestine problem is put forth in a fairly correct perspective.

When Le Carre first decided to research the subject of the Palestinians in Lebanon, the initial draft of his novel had already been written. Consequently, his meetings with Salah Ta'mari, a Palestinian fighter who was imprisoned in Ansar, and with people in the refugee camps had little impact on shaping the two principal Palestinian characters. These encounters, however, did seem to influence his portrayal of the Palestinian cause in fairly accurate and sympathetic terms. The impact of his visits is also felt in the compassionate tone of the introduction; he thanks his hosts, showing sympathy and understanding of their plight.

In comparison with other popular novels, *The Little Drummer Girl* is one of the best portrayals of Palestinian history, but two of the principal characters, the Palestinian brothers (Salim and Khalil), fall short of evolving into fully developed personages with whom the reader can establish a rapport. They deviate only partially from the stereotypical portrayal of Arabs: on one hand, they are handsome, sexually attractive, and well-read; on the other hand, they are terrorists with a penchant for easy living. The plot deals with a hunter—Kurtz, an intelligence agent working for Mossad—whose quarry is the two Palestinian brothers. The book is an

elaborate and patiently spun web of espionage set up to catch one particular Palestinian terrorist. Yet, the terrorist and his brother are less important than the actual hunt. The hunted remain almost secondary to the storyline and are always seen through the watchful eyes of Mossad. Consequently, Palestinians are presented not so much as believable characters with whom the reader can relate, but rather as mere reflections of a just and honest cause. The result is something of a mixed blessing: the voice of the Palestinians and of their history and suffering is present, but the Palestinian characters remain somewhat remote, distant, and not quite fully developed.

The Real and the Unreal

Much of this novel revolves around the relationship between acting on a stage and acting within the theater of the real—the domain of the spy. The novel is replete with references to the thin line that exists between reality and the imagination. The hunter must make his quarry believe the net of deceit which is established for his capture, and in the process the hunter must assume the identity of the quarry and anticipate his every move. The hunted Palestinians and the Mossad hunters must penetrate each others' skins, like actors impersonating characters in order to know more about them. In a world where the line between illusion and reality is so fine, the Israeli intelligence agent, Joseph, learns to impersonate and speak for the Palestinian Salim, who is captured and will soon be disposed of. Joseph must impersonate Salim to train the British actress Charlie—now posing as Salim's lover—in the trap set by Mossad to catch Khalil.

To the reader as well, Joseph is both the Israeli agent and the Palestinian terrorist whom he is impersonating. He is very convincing in both cases since the differences that exist between the two characters are not that extreme. The situation raises all kinds of questions about the identity and the motivations of the Palestinian and Israeli players. It also puts the readers' preconceived sympathies to the test because, for a brief time, Joseph is both Pales-

tinian and Israeli. In this process, many parallels are drawn between the two characters: both are motivated by national concerns, both are intelligent, and both are locked in a deadly game. This technique keeps the Palestinian character remote; Kathleen Christison is correct in arguing that "We know much about him [Salim] but we do not know him personally and therefore cannot like him."[24] Yet the dual identity of Joseph makes it difficult for the reader to dismiss the Palestinian. The plot forces readers to question their preconceived feelings about Palestinians because of the affinity they feel for the character of Joseph.

The aim of Joseph's charade and his assumption of a dual personality is to train Charlie, a British actress in search of a cause, in all that there is to know about Salim. Charlie is recruited in the first place because she is physically drawn to Joseph. Consequently, her feelings for Salim/Joseph are somewhat confused, particularly since she is later attracted to Khalil.

Towards the end of the novel, the identities of Khalil and Joseph begin to merge in Charlie's mind. We learn that Khalil, like Joseph, is awake both day and night; neither is ever able to sleep. Charlie describes Khalil as having "Joseph's eyes, dark, powerful and all seeing." And elsewhere, Khalil's eyes studied her "exactly as Joseph had done on the hilltop outside Delphi." For the reader the message becomes clear: Joseph and Khalil have had to develop similar traits because they have had to share a certain history and a certain mode of life. Each has learned to anticipate the other at every moment. The quarry and the hunter have had to develop the same characteristics in order to survive. And perhaps that is the most powerful underlying statement made in *The Little Drummer Girl*: Palestinians and Israelis are bound together on a common path of violence and espionage until such a time when a just solution to the conflict between them can be found.

Le Carre gives a new interpretation to the image of the Palestinian, and it is in those passages that a certain parallel is drawn between Joseph and the two Palestinian brothers. The novelist is

saying here that there are similar traits which the attractive Israeli agent and the two Palestinian brothers share. There are times when this parallel seems to include the mutual sense of responsibility that each side feels towards their people as well as the sense that both are driven by a sense of national commitment. Such a statement is rare in novels that tend towards a simplistic view of the world in terms of "the good guys and the bad guys." But one must also be careful not to read too much into this blurring of the lines, inasmuch that the confusion between the two sides exists strictly in the mind of Charlie. She feels physically and emotionally drawn first to Joseph and then to Khalil, even while she poses as Salim's lover. The analogy between the two is primarily based on the way that Charlie feels towards them. But the reader is also invited to share in this juxtaposition of illusion and reality.

A Sense of Powerlessness

The relationship between Kurtz and the two Palestinian brothers, as contemplated by Mossad, is very much like the relationship between a spider and its prey. Salim and Khalil are observed and their habits are analyzed in much the same way one might examine a frog or a lower life form. So elaborate is the scheme, that one wonders if the Mossad can dedicate so much time, effort, and money to the pursuit of one individual. For the reader, this relationship sets the stage on which the Palestine problem will unfold. The two brothers, one a country boy turned playboy fighter, and the other a more reclusive individual, have a very small chance against such a massive intelligence operation. The images of well-trained agents with an infinite supply of information communicate to the reader the powerlessness and vulnerability of the Palestinians.

This same sense of vulnerability is reinforced when Charlie penetrates the cells to receive her military training, and experiences first-hand the Israeli bombing raids of the refugee camps in Lebanon. Her hosts tell her—as well as the reader—about the major tragedies of Palestinian history: Deir Yassin, Tel El-Za'tar,

and others. Through the plot and the passages that describe the massacre of Palestinians, the reader is made aware of the massive Israeli military and intelligence apparatus facing the Palestinians. The message clearly conveys the Palestinians' sense of powerlessness.

Even the personal habits and idiosyncrasies of Khalil and Salim are manipulated to entrap them. When we first observe Salim through the watchful eyes of Israeli intelligence agents, he is described as a "terrorist" with a weakness for "cars, women, and the soft life." He is also described by Kurtz as a "good-looking kid" and a well-read one. But it is these weaknesses that make his behavior so predictable and finally enable Mossad to capture him. He meets his demise when, in an effort to impress an attractive brunette, he falls for the bait and releases all four locks to the doors of his red Mercedes to offer her a ride. Intelligence agents enter the car, then drug and capture him. Charlie, on the other hand, is used as bait to capture Khalil, who is far more reclusive.

Salim's image is that of the playboy killer who uses women to do his "terrorist" work. The novel begins with a scene in which a Swedish woman delivers a suitcase wired with explosives to the house of an Israeli diplomat. Presumably, the woman is Salim's lover. But in the elaborate net set up to capture the two brothers, the reader gets the feeling that the two stand little chance against such an advanced intelligence machine. Consequently, the novel conveys the idea that the Palestinians are prey caught in a web of espionage and deceit. The bombing of the refugee camps reinforces this image of a people victimized by overwhelming historical events.

Chapter 2

The Haj
The Arab-Israeli Conflict as a Cultural Contest

Leon Uris' 525-page novel, *The Haj*, is a saga designed to depict Palestinian-Arab society in a way that makes it possible to sustain the argument that the indigenous population of Palestine has no right to the land. The Arab is portrayed as lazy, incapable of caring for the land, and above all, lacking any morality. This stereotype of Arab society as primitive and inadequate, is contrasted with the image of life on a progressive and technologically superior Jewish kibbutz. Through this contrast, the author makes the statement that the land of Palestine must belong to those who are capable of progress and are best equipped to care for it. The argument is not new; it has often been made in Zionist literature. The author's innovation lies in presenting the right-wing Zionist arguments for the 1948 dispersal of Palestinians in novelistic form. In order to justify these arguments, the Arabs must appear as lacking the moral standards that bind all modern societies. The Arabs must be shown to be backward, degenerate, and capable only of understanding the language of brute force. Indeed, the indigenous population must be depicted negatively through the use of primitive stereotypes. It is here that Uris, also the author of *Exodus*, demonstrates overwhelming zeal.

The author alludes to incestuous relations between mothers and sons, between fathers and very young sons, and between women of the same household. The only code to which the Arab adheres is that of revenge and deceit (family members are not exempt from this practice). Patriarchs, like Ibrahim the Haj, are totally selfish creatures who care very little about their wives and despise their sons. Arab women and children suffer more at the hands of Arab men than as a consequence of their nation's dispersal following the establishment of Israel in 1948. As refugees,

women and children are forced to live in primitive conditions, but this supposedly comes naturally to them according to Uris. Moreover, women suffer a great deal due to the polygamous nature of Arab society, and children are tormented by the brutality of adults. As a result of their victimization, Palestinian women and children become vindictive creatures who think nothing of conspiring against their husbands and fathers. The result is a house, and by extension a society, that is divided.

While no one will argue that there isn't room in Arab society for improving the position of women and children, *The Haj* represents a totally distorted picture of this situation. In the camps on the West Bank, family ties constitute the only source of defense left to the individual confronting a harsh political and historical reality. The novel reverses this fact: it depicts conflict within the family as the main problem confronting Palestinians, while the historical and political conflict becomes marginal. This reversal constitutes a grave distortion of history and current reality.

Establishing Credibility

The novel begins with a first person narrative in which Ishmael, the son of Ibrahim and Hagar, tells of his deprived childhood in the village of Tabah near Jerusalem right after the 1936 riots. The fact that the narrator, Ishmael, paints an ugly portrait of Arab family life lends greater credibility to his story than if it were told by an outsider. Uris deliberately uses this subtle literary device in order to reinforce his point that it is the Arabs themselves who are discontent with their lives on both a personal and social level. Ishmael begins his account by describing the brutality of his father—the Haj—on the day Ishmael's mother is sent back to her family, and the Haj is about to take a much younger wife. He speaks of being beaten and left to cry in the gutter:

> There I was, dressed as a girl, shrieking at the top of my lungs. I could feel salt from my tears and snot from my nose dripping into my mouth. I shrieked in desperation,

> for even at that age I realized that there was nothing I could do about my situation. There was no way to either rebel or protest.[25]

Yet, the sense of credibility sought by the author is not achieved. The careful reader will note that the opinions attributed to Ishmael are those of an outsider, and the behavior of the Haj is also consistently judged from a vantage point which exists outside Arab culture. A believable character reminiscing about his own childhood is incapable of seeing only the negative side of his life. There would also be some sentimental aspect of Arab culture which Ishmael esteems, but none is apparent in this novel. Small descriptive details betray the position of the writer. A person growing up in a culture where all boys are dressed in robes until age five is not likely to see himself as dressed in a little girl's clothes. These and other details expose the pretense of historical and social accuracy, attributes so highly praised by many book reviewers.

Once a sense of credibility seemingly has been established, the author seeks further to create a sense of objectivity. On the same page on which the above quotation appears, we learn that Ishmael's story is told from two points of view, one Arab and the other Jewish: "There are times I [Ishmael] will speak to you in my own voice. Others will speak in theirs."[26] Even though Uris attempts through this statement to establish that there are two sides to the story, nowhere in the novel does he expose the reader to an accurate view of how Palestinians view their own history. The pretense at objectivity is used to hide the numerous historical distortions which follow, only a few of which can be mentioned here.

Historical Distortions

Through a dialogue between two Arab patriarchs, the author explains the flight of Palestinians in 1948 in terms of inter-Arab strife: Uris alleges that the refugees left their homes to flee the brutality of the invading Arab armies. A graphic scene describes the rape of Ishmael's mother, sister-in-law, and stepmother at the

hands of Arab soldiers. The reader is led to believe that the local population fled to avoid similar events, and not because of any intervention by Hagana or Irgun forces. One of the patriarchs says:

> One morning we suddenly awoke to find our whole population fleeing. Even though we are here in safe Arab territory, we have been terrified by events. First Kaukji came and stripped our fields. Afterward the Iraqi Army treated us very rudely. The Iraqis have fed and supplied their army largely from our crops and our shops without payment.[27]

A well-documented study of the reasons why Palestinians fled in 1948 can be found in Nafez Nazzal's *The Palestinian Exodus From Galilee, 1948*, which indicates that most Palestinians left as a result of struggle. He argues that to some extent, the Palestinian exodus could have been the result of normal wartime panic. However, the Israeli refusal to allow the indigenous Arab population to return to their homes—a refusal which continues to this day—is the ultimate solution to Herzel's formula for removing the Arabs from their homes and "gently" expropriating their property.[28]

Uris argues that others fled in response to radio broadcasts by Arab leaders requesting them to leave the country. "Be it known I [Haj Ibrahim] was forced from my village—and not by Jewish gunfire. For months the entire Arab world spoke to us with one single voice. Get out. No one had a different opinion."[29]

Uris concludes that the responsibility for the refugees should now be shouldered by Arab governments, who were the cause of this problem, and that the solution should come in the form of absorbing the refugees into Arab countries. The Haj speaks of Arab hospitality as follows: "For month after month we have been told to abandon our villages to make room for the armies. The leaders who insisted that we leave are damned well responsible to see that we were welcomed, fed, and sheltered."[30]

It is difficult to accept the contention that there were broadcasts asking the Arab population to flee when, at the same time, the radio stations were predicting the victorious advance of Arab armies. A number of scholars, among them Christopher Hitchens,[31] disprove the story of "broadcasts" mentioned in many Israeli government documents. Hitchens argues that authors who have examined all radio broadcasts and leading Egyptian, Lebanese, and Palestinian newspapers, find no evidence to support these claims.

Other historical distortions propagated in this novel include the argument that the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict grew out of the irrational hatred that Arabs harbor towards Jews. Allegedly, this free-floating hatred grew out of two main factors: anti-Semitic feelings, and the sense of inferiority that Arabs experienced when confronted with a technologically advanced Jewish society. The Arabs presumably sought to destroy the kibbutz because they wanted to avoid self-criticism. The issue thus becomes less a question of rights to the land, and more a contest in cultural supremacy in which Islam is portrayed as backward and removed from the present historical context, while the kibbutz society belongs to modernity and to all that is good.

Islam versus Modernity

The concept of a blind belief in God's will plays a very important role in forming the Arab stereotype. Islam demands of Moslems a certain degree of submission to divine providence. How then, one might ask, does this stereotype conflict with reality? In *The Haj*, the Moslems' belief in God is depicted as a form of lunacy or insanity because it is placed in opposition to pragmatism, science, and self-reliance—all qualities attributed to the modern world and embodied in the residents of the kibbutz. The image of the Arabs' submission to fate is thus presented as the opposite of what the modern world stands for in terms of progress and hard work. The following scene is only one example of the technique Uris uses to infer the dichotomy between progress and

Islam, in which the Haj uses his belief in divine providence as a cover for the inadequacies and the inferiority of Arab society.

Ramzia, the sixteen-year-old wife of Haj Ibrahim, had just delivered a baby and had not yet recovered when the Haj, depicted throughout as having a voracious sexual appetite, forces himself on her, causing her extreme psychological and physical damage. As a result, she becomes hysterical and neglects her child, who is subsequently poisoned after eating his own excrement. The description is as revolting to the reader as it is damaging to the image of Arabs. It is also impossible to imagine that such a tragedy could occur in an extended family system where the total seclusion of one individual is an almost impossible event, and where female members of a household are always readily available to help. But the scene succeeds in conveying the message that Arabs care very little about one another and about human life in general.

This scene is also used to reinforce the message that Arabs hide behind Islam in order to cover their embarrassment in the face of Jewish superiority. At a time when his infant son's life is at stake, the Haj refuses the help of a Jewish doctor because he is embarrassed by the backwardness of his own people. He refuses the doctor by saying, "No! No! No!...You [Ishmael] bring them here to show them how inferior we are. No pity from Jews! No pity! No mercy! I will not have you [the doctor] coming into my home to prove your superiority!"[32] In a culture where the life of a male son is so highly valued, no effort would be too great to save that child, and the Haj's response is not believable. But this episode serves to establish the pretext that Jewish superiority, in the midst of Arab backwardness, was reason enough for the Arabs to desire the destruction of the kibbutz so as to avoid an unpleasant comparison between the two cultures.

When the baby is pronounced dead, the Haj attributes the death to the "jinn"—whose evil spirits must be exorcised from the house—and to divine providence: "It is Allah's will that the baby

should die." Gideon, the Israeli, responds by saying, "Allah's will my ass! That child died of filth and neglect! Come on, Shimon, let's get out of here." This passage reaffirms that Islam is a regressive force that cannot measure up to the cultural superiority of the kibbutz. Islam is the antithesis of all that is modern and good. In this context Islam can only provide a view of the world that is primitive and outside the historical process.

The Arab Stereotype

From the beginning, we learn that Haj Ibrahim was able to hold on to the position of *mukhtar* (village leader), which he inherited from his father, only with a great deal of cunning and brute force. After his father's death, the other families in the village sought to terminate the *Soukori* (inheritance) rule by electing a different *mukhtar*. But Ibrahim challenges this decision with the dagger left to him by his father. His opponents back down, and it is then that Ibrahim "knew the power of the dagger in Arab life."[33] This episode sets the tone for the rest of the narrative. Throughout, the Arabs are portrayed as a people who understand only the language of force. And from then on, Ibrahim realizes that force alone can provide an Arab with control over his own life.

The author carefully constructs the character of Ibrahim by bringing together all the well-known Orientalist myths about Arabs: an insatiable and animalistic appetite for sex; a belief in divine providence, one that verges on lunacy; and adherence to a social system that is based on brutality.

The first episode deals with the relationship between mother and son in Arab culture. We learn that Ishmael, as all male infants, is breast-fed until age five—a fact for which there is certainly no evidence in Arab culture. Far from creating an image of tenderness, these breast-feeding scenes enforce an image of incestuous relations between mother and son. Furthermore, the bond established between the two is also depicted as being based on a common hatred of the father. The passages that describe Ishmael at age

five, either breast-feeding or nestled away from the world between his mothers breasts "that are always full of milk," form a sharp contrast with the violence inflicted upon him by his father. "My father," he says, "grabbed me by the arm and shook me so violently I thought I would faint. Then he tossed me like garbage, so that I landed in the open sewer that ran down from the top of the village."[34]

In the very next passage, the image of the Arab as a brute is conveniently used to explain the historical predicament of the refugees. Ishmael comments on the scene in refugee camps where little boys are "being hit and shaken and taunted by adults, family and playmates. All screaming to an unhearing Allah."[35] The author is trying to suggest that the children in the refugee camps suffer more at the hands of cruel adults than they do as a result of their historical predicament. Therefore, the real problem facing these children is found in the values that inform Arab society, and not in the political situation which the author perceives as external to their reality.

Arab society is seen as brutal to those who are weak, especially sick children. Ibrahim states, "My uncle Farouk was a slave to my father." We learn that Farouk had been a sickly child and would have been left in the kitchen to die had he not been saved by Christian missionaries. This image of the sick child left to die is repeated when the Haj's infant son dies of neglect because the Jewish doctor arrives too late to save him.

By far the strongest form of brutality and mental anguish is presented in the oppression of women. A rather powerful scene describes the agony of Hagar as she hears the Haj making love to his new wife, the sixteen-year-old Ramzia, and seeks comfort from her six-year-old son. Incest, revenge, and brutality are shown to be at the root of Arab social structures. The son says:

> I slept with my mother, folded up in her arms, my head between her breasts. When my father and Ramzia made love every night, my mother lay awake, only a few feet

> from them, forced to listen to them have sex, sometimes half the night long. When my father kissed Ramzia and groaned and spoke words of endearment to her, my mother's massive body convulsed with pain. I could feel her fingers claw at me unconsciously and hear her stifled sobs and sometimes I could feel her tears. And when I wept as well, she soothed me by stroking my genitals.[36]

According to this scenario, Arab women seek revenge through their sons. Ishmael's mother teaches him how to steal from his father by blackmailing him. The underlying statement here is that Arab families are pitted against each other and the bonds between family members are based on oppression and force. Although the Haj has been married many times, he is bound to his wives only through an animal-like appetite for sex that reflects his appetite for brutality. The Haj, therefore, has no feelings of tenderness or compassion.

In addition to his many wives and the prostitutes that he meets in Jaffa, the Haj also visits all the widows and childless women in the village. One might ask how such behavior can be reconciled with the strict code of female honor described in this novel. Particularly in the camps, the author creates the impression that Arab men and women find it easier to practice prostitution than to seek real work. However, the reader is left wondering how there can be so many prostitutes when, according to the novel, the code of morality demands that a woman who loses her virginity outside of marriage be killed by her own family to protect their honor. Indeed, the novel culminates in a scene of the Haj killing his own daughter for this reason. These opposing views are never reconciled or explained.

In spite of his sexual powers, the Haj is not a good lover. The real lover, who has the sympathies of Arab women and rides on a draped Arabian horse, is Gideon Asch, a Jewish resident of a nearby kibbutz. The stereotype of the Haj is based primarily on the old Hollywood stereotype of the sheikh in silent movies. But, whereas

that stereotype once held a degree of attraction for women, here that magnetism is transferred to Gideon. A very interesting split occurs in the Hollywood stereotype: only the animal instinct is attributed to the Haj, while all the romanticism is bestowed on the Israeli hero. The Haj's two wives, and later on his European girlfriend, snicker at his brutal ways in bed. And while the Haj and other Arab men have to buy their women like chattel, Gideon is followed into the hills by a number of Arab women whose husbands are in prison or in jail for stealing, smuggling, or assault.

The author robs the Hollywood stereotype of that small percent of magnetism that was once attributed to the Arab sheikh, leaving the Haj with only an animalistic streak of sexual brutality. Secondly, women, depicted as the victimized sector of Arab society, are shown here to be sympathetic toward Gideon Asch, and through him, sympathetic also toward the Zionist project in Palestine. They are portrayed as a group of well-wishers, a large constituency which harbors a secret love for Gideon that is motivated by a sense of revenge towards the brutality of Arabs.

The Haj spans the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict—from the 1936 riots to the formation of the state of Israel and the dispersal of Palestinian refugees into Arab countries. It ends on a tragic note when the Haj murders his own daughter, Nada, because she is no longer a virgin and because she foils his plans to sell her off in marriage. It is not within the confines of the present analysis to deal with all the misconceptions, negative images, and blatant historical lies that this book seeks to perpetuate about Arabs. But it is important to note that the stereotype of the Arab as a base and backward human being, is utilized here to explain what is essentially a political and not a cultural problem. It must be understood that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a cultural contest; it is a conflict over the rights to the land. In trying to justify the conquest of Palestine on the basis of the cultural backwardness of the Arabs, the novel commits a grave historical error.

Chapter 3

Hunter
What if Kaddafi Gets the Bomb?

"Libya has the ultimate weapon—and the ultimate enemy: a man called Hunter." *Hunter*,[37] by Jere Maudsley, is a political thriller that was first published in 1985, and reprinted in 1987. It belongs to the abundance of literature about a nuclear holocaust set off by the Middle East conflict. It is a "What if Kaddafi gets the bomb?" type of novel based on the simplistic opposition between good and evil: Mossad and their American allies are the good guys, and they are up against Canadian anti-Semitic rapists, Libyans, PLO operatives, and members of the Saudi ruling family—all of whom are intent on destroying Israel. In this mixture of fact and fiction, Saudi F-15s are loaded with neutron warheads bought from Canadian anti-Semites, and are destined to hit Israel on the eve of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The intention of the novel is to make Israel look like the victim of Arab aggression, even as Israeli planes and bombers are about to invade south Lebanon. In the process, all current—and some dormant—negative stereotypes of Arab are evoked, and nearly every imaginable harm is sanctioned when intended for Arabs.

The Plot

The plot can be briefly summarized as follows. Hunter, a successful real estate magnate working for Paul MacGregor, is shocked when he reads that Regis Bennett—whom the reader knows to be a provider of arms to Kaddafi—has become the External Affairs Minister of Canada. The incident triggers in Hunter's memory a previous encounter. Hunter, born Eddie Villard, had witnessed the rape and murder of an immigrant Jewish woman by Bennett and his two college friends, one who later turns out to be Hunter's brother. Hunter (Eddie) is forced to flee the country because Bennett, once discovered, tries to pin the rape on Hunter.

Consequently, Hunter undergoes several identity transformations to avoid being tracked down by Bennett.

Hunter is anguished by his own cowardice; he ran away when he should have tried to save the Jewish woman, who was also a victim of the Holocaust. When Hunter's benefactor, MacGregor (whom he met while fighting in Viet Nam), suggests that he help the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, Hunter readily agrees. Motivated by a need to atone, Hunter is sent out to bait Bennett by arranging a meeting on Bennett's yacht in the Mediterranean. The reader can empathize with the guilt this action insinuates, akin to what the West must feel for letting the Holocaust take place. But when Hunter's act of atonement takes the form of killing four Palestinians, one must question the intention of the plot.

The meeting between Bennett, his two accomplices in the rape, and Hunter takes place as planned, while Mossad agents follow the situation from a distance. As with all thrillers, there are complications. But, Hunter's sheer intellectual superiority over the witless Arabs enables him to board the Libyan ship disguised as a Canadian technician whom the Libyans are expecting. Ali Djinn, in charge of the Libyan ship, is too busy to notice Hunter since, in the manner typical of the treacherous Arab, he is otherwise occupied with blowing up the Canadian yacht (after its cargo has been unloaded). The message, repeated elsewhere, is that Arabs are traitors who kill their friends when they are no longer useful. By contrast, the humane Mossad agents rescue the surviving Canadians, and then interrogate them.

Again, Hunter's superior mental approach towards the emotional, gesticulating Arabs he meets enables him to hijack the neutron warheads during the trip from Libya to Saudi Arabia. This time, Hunter disguises himself in Ali Djinn's flowing Arab robes after garroting him. However, when he arrives in Israel, Mossad agents, mistaking him for an Arab, shoot and seriously wound him. Mossad then takes full responsibility for his protection and safe haven in California. The underlying message is that Israelis

take care of their friends, whereas Arabs stab theirs in the back. Hunter lies in bed totally disabled but satisfied in the knowledge that he has atoned for his cowardice by helping Israel carry out several operations in the south of Lebanon.

The Arab as a Violent Killer

The prologue sets the tone for the rest of the novel. Muammar Kaddafi and his entourage are described in terms that are reminiscent of the early Orientalist vision of the Middle East—a place where the bizarre, the violent, and the crazed dominate. The description of Kaddafi and his friends evokes the image of the Arab as a wanton murderer whose objective is the destruction of Israel:

> Muammar Kaddafi's eyes glittered snakelike in a nascent combination of genius and Napoleonic psychosis...yet behind the smooth, handsome, benevolent facade of the Libyan dictator, one could sense madness. One could smell the stench of death.[38]

Kaddafi is listening to a pathetic figure, Pehzad Hasebe, "whose eyes moved constantly, fitfully," as he formulates a plan to destroy Israel. The plan is to be executed when Israel is busy attacking the PLO in Lebanon. In this twist of events the victimizer become the victim. The reader fears for the weak, beleaguered Israel, even though historically one knows that the Israeli army swept over the south of Lebanon while encountering very little resistance. Hasebe says:

> I am sure, Eminence, that you will be pleased with what has been accomplished. For the past year we have been shipping and installing wing tank modifications for the Saudi Air Force's F-15 fighter bomber wing. This is commanded by one of our allies in Saudi Arabia. The planes now have the operational range to attack Israel.[39]

By utilizing facts derived from the real world—the sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia—the novel makes it possible for the reader to

find credence in the negative stereotyping of Arabs that ensues. Kaddafi is delighted with the idea that the missiles "'will annihilate the population of Israel. The Jewish state will cease to exist.'... Kaddafi began to laugh, to clap his hands like a child."[40] By giving the principal Arab character, the villain, the name of an existing Arab leader, the reader is made to believe that what ensues and all that is attributed to this character is factual. This brief passage establishes the image of Arabs as crazed maniacs intent on violence and human destruction. To top this, upon the completion of his plan, Hasebe is executed by the tall Bedouin body guard, Ali Djinn, who cuts his throat with a wire. This graphic scene—"his toupee flopped forward obscenely. In one final insult his bladder and sphincter released"—enforces the idea that Arabs are not to be trusted; they will betray even those who are loyal to them. The stereotype of the Arab as traitor, abandoned by Hollywood for some time now, returns in the popular novel.

Why assume that Kaddafi stands for the stereotype of all Arabs? Because as the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that this is a story about opposing sides: the "good guys," the Americans and Israelis, are three-dimensional characters; and the "bad guys," including the PLO, the anti-Semites profiting from arms sales, and the Saudi royal family, are all presented as one-dimensional characters. In other words, there is no alternative image of the Arab; the only one presented is that of a crazed Kaddafi and his kind.

The Palestinians do not escape the author's ruthless style:

> As rotten as the PLO have become, they don't hold a candle to the people that you're after. Those people kill from their boardrooms in their thousand-dollar silk suits sipping brandy from crystal snifters and smoking five-dollar Havanas. They kill by proxy. They don't care if it's a woman or a kid or a whole people.[41]

The PLO are, of course, further singled out as senseless killers of children and pregnant women. Ironically, the passage describ-

ing these presumed atrocities, quoted below, is more reminiscent of the Sabra and Shatila massacre—where Palestinians were the victims—than any attack ever committed by the PLO inside Israel. This reversal of reality, in which the victims become the victimizers, is quite common in this novel. And Hunter, the central character who is fighting to see "justice" done, quickly becomes a killer while still acting with the conviction of a victim:

> He had seen the results of PLO attacks. Women, little children and old people cut to pieces; their bodies bayoneted, guts spilled on the ground. Garroted corpses, their heads hanging by strips of skin, their spines exposed. Irrational anger had returned to him—the desire to strike back, to avenge. There were times in this last week where he had to be restrained from killing, but he had killed and killed again. Yet his appetite had only been whetted. He was racing toward the base camp. He, who had begun as a follower, delighted in leading. Most of his group were already exhausted. Strangely, he was exhilarated. His war, perhaps his life, was just beginning.[42]

Perhaps the most revolting aspect of this novel—and there are many—is that the narrative reinforces and encourages in the reader a base desire for torture and killing, as long as that desire is focused against Arabs. In the above passage, Hunter's desire to kill PLO fighters appeals to his appetite to kill in general. He is delighted, and even exhilarated, to have the opportunity to do so. He seeks to be a leader in this field, whereas before he was happy to follow Mossad commands. Through killing, Hunter's life was beginning anew. This passage encourages the wanton act of killing as long as it is directed against Arabs. This passage is not unique since the same notion of killing as an act of pleasure and revenge is reinforced throughout the novel. In other words, the act of murder becomes almost admirable when those being killed are Arabs.

In the past, Hollywood would have attributed sexual prowess to the Arab, but here it is Hunter who manages to seduce all the

women. There are several sex scenes, one of which takes place in a private cabin on board a commercial plane. However liberated the women are, sex here always takes the form of a thank-you note. Although women are described as free, strong, and rough—in other words, just like men—their role is primarily to entertain Hunter in return for services rendered to Mossad. His encounter with a Sabra woman in Israel typifies this attitude:

> Owen [Hunter] was startled to see that his partner was a Sabra woman. She was almost as tall as he, and deeply tanned. He wasn't prepared to attack a woman. She sensed his reluctance, took instant advantage of it and circled her body inside his knife hand, her right arm clamped down on his wrists. Her left hand chopped into his upper arm, dealing him a crushing blow which numbed his arm almost totally. She twisted it down, back and up, levering her entire weight against its extension. Hunter left his feet and landed heavily on his back, his shoulder and arm suddenly alive with searing pain.[43]

But this Sabra woman, stronger than a man, is also the stereotypical female sex object. She offers herself to Hunter as a gift, an act of recognition for what he has done for Israel. Is there any act more stereotypical than that of using a woman's body as an object offered as a form of compensation or exchange?

The stereotype of the Arab in this novel combines all the ugly images that Hollywood and other forms of popular culture produce that have a strong anti-Arab bias. Through their friendship with Regis Bennett and the Canadian contingent, the Arabs are linked with the anti-Semitic drive that motivated the rape of the Jewish immigrant. Like the rape, their desire to destroy Israel is motivated by the same sentiment. Hasebe senses that this anti-Semitic hatred is a unifying factor when he states, "I have to trust him [Kaddafi]. We all fight for the same cause, for the same God." Of course, minutes later he is garroted on Kaddafi's orders. His usefulness has expired.

Chapter 4

Agents of Innocence
The Eternal Triangle—PLO, CIA, Mossad

More than Islamic fundamentalism or the excesses of the oil-rich Arabs, the Arab-Israeli conflict has inspired numerous novels, fictional biographies, and a variety of thrillers focusing on the Palestinians. It is possible to say that roughly ninety percent of all the novels dealing with Arabs today are about the Arab-Israeli conflict. While all portray the Arab as a terrorist inclined toward sexual excesses, some spy novelists acquainted with the Middle East have managed to come closer to portraying the Palestinian as a character, as opposed to a stereotype. David Ignatius' novel, *Agents of Innocence*, belongs to this category.

A character responds to the present historical conditions that inform his actions, while, by contrast, a stereotype remains fixed and simplistic. The Palestinian stereotype is always placed in a Manichaean relationship with its counterpart, the brilliant Mossad or CIA agent. On the other hand, the Palestinian's motives are always tribal, as opposed to his counterpart, who is always in pursuit of justice and peace. A character develops and evolves throughout the narrative, while a stereotype tends to remain static, like a worn-out cliche.

Agents of Innocence is a spy thriller that deals with the life of Jamal Ramlawi, head of the PLO intelligence division, and a friend of the "Old Man" (Arafat). Ramlawi's sexual prowess, his success with blonds in particular, is not much different from the stereotype of the Arab in Orientalist discourse. However, Ignatius, a reporter who spent three years covering the Middle East for *The Wall Street Journal*, portrays Jamal as a complex character whose personality evolves in relation to the current historical and socio-economic situation. Jamal's actions are based on his commitment

to the organization to which he belongs, in the same way that his counterpart, Tom Rogers, is committed to the CIA.

Although the author never mentions it, the life of Jamal Ramlawi is based in part on the life of Hassan Salameh, who was once married to the famous Georgina Rizk, a Lebanese woman who was crowned Miss Universe. Salameh served as the PLO's liaison with the CIA when, in 1979, he was gunned down in Beirut by the Mossad as much for his alleged involvement with the attack on the Israeli athletes in Munich as for his contacts with the CIA—which were highly resented by Israel. Ignatius concludes that the United States could have prevented Salameh's death had the CIA been willing to admit its connection with the PLO to the Israeli intelligence. His assassination destroyed the link that could have prevented the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut and the consequential death of Rogers, Salameh's CIA counterpart. In this mix of fact and fiction, written from a point of view that is close to that of Rogers, Ignatius questions the willingness of the United States to support its Arab friends in times of adversity.

Character versus Stereotype

The novel is also about CIA involvement in Lebanon. Tom Rogers is posted in Beirut to gather intelligence on the growing Palestine Liberation Movement. First, he manages to recruit a Lebanese by the name of Fuad. Motivated by a sincere belief that the Americans will save the Middle East, Fuad is the perfect CIA operative because he is totally committed to his work. When Rogers is introduced to Ramlawi through Fuad, Rogers believes that he has found an equally receptive ear in the upper ranks of the PLO. But Ramlawi has a different intention. He wants an exchange of information between the CIA and the PLO. The PLO has its own interests to consider, which include establishing contact with the Americans and gaining recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people.

In the beginning the offer seems preposterous to Rogers, who believes that he can still make Ramlawi his agent. But when Ramlawi refuses to plant a CIA microphone in the offices of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and also declines a bribe of $3 million, the CIA finally accepts his original proposal to work *with* the CIA rather than *for* it. The Manichaean nature of the Arab stereotype, prevalent in many novels on the Arab world, is somewhat challenged here. Ramlawi is a person of integrity committed to the PLO, in much the same way that Rogers is committed to the CIA, although the Palestinian is still portrayed here as a terrorist.

Before this agreement is reached, in an effort to learn more about the mysterious Jamal Ramlawi and possibly blackmail him, the CIA bugs his office and installs cameras there. This part of the plot gives the writer the opportunity to resurrect the image of the Arab as a sex-hungry fanatic. The obligatory sex scenes that seem necessary to sell a novel all take place in Ramlawi's office. Even when compared with fellow Arabs, the Palestinian is portrayed as highly sexual. Lebanese intelligence files on Ramlawi confirm this view. The reader is exposed to the sexual habits of Ramlawi through the racist and sexist comments of CIA agents as they examine the photos. The women who visit his office are European; for example, the photographs of Ramlawi with the wife of a French diplomat emphasize the Orientalist notion that Arab men have greater sexual capabilities than their European counterparts. Such comparisons, which portray Arab men as capable of performing sex with little or no emotional involvement, hold racist overtones which link the Arab with the animal kingdom. Through the endless sexual exploits of Ramlawi, the only Arab character whose life is described in some detail, the reader is led to believe that all Arab men have an insatiable sexual appetite. It is not surprising to find that there is also a female Arab character cast in the role of the supreme seductress. Madame Solange Jezzine, a Lebanese socialite with a particular hatred for the Palestinians, serves as the female counterpart to Ramlawi, with equally strong seductive tech-

niques. Rogers himself falls prey to her charm in a scene that can rival any harem-inspired Hollywood movie.

An interesting transformation occurs in the character of Ramlawi as the intelligence branch of the PLO becomes, under his supervision, a highly effective tool capable of surpassing the CIA in gathering information. Ramlawi, previously considered by one CIA agent as a bad risk because of his sexual excesses, abandons his disreputable behavior and assumes the respectable image of a diplomat acceptable to the CIA bureaucrats in Washington, who extend an invitation to him to visit their headquarters. Such an evolution in the persona of the Palestinian is very rare in popular fiction. Ignatius attributes this evolution to Ramlawi's maturity and to his sense of accomplishment in organizing the intelligence branch of the PLO. By the same token, Ramlawi becomes a fully developed character, as opposed to a flat stereotype.

With his new role, certain changes take place in Ramlawi's personality. As Rogers says to Hoffman, a former member of the CIA who has become a businessman in Saudi Arabia: "The person I remember was a wild-ass kid who had trouble keeping his pecker in his pants. The guy you're talking about sounds like he graduated from Yale."[44] What has not changed, of course, is that Hoffman continues to view Arabs in very racist terms, calling Ramlawi a "donkey dick" and a "wild-ass." Ramlawi moves beyond the stereotype of a sex maniac and terrorist, who is allegedly a member of Black September, to become a respectable intelligence officer. This evolution towards a full-fledged character is based in part on the greater acceptance of Palestinian rights, inasmuch as it reflects the status and recognition gained by the PLO.

Ramlawi's plan to open channels of communication with the Americans through the CIA in Lebanon leads to a non-aggression pact whereby the PLO provides information about acts of sabotage intended against American targets in Lebanon and, in return, the CIA agrees not to participate in aggressive acts against the PLO in Lebanon. Numerous analysts have confirmed that such an agree-

ment did indeed exist between the two parties up until the PLO's evacuation from Lebanon in 1982. Some have surmised that, had PLO intelligence continued to operate in Lebanon, the bombing of the U.S. embassy and the ensuing civilian deaths could have been prevented. *Agents of Innocence* is based on this interpretation, and carries the idea further to note that top officials at CIA headquarters, as well as the "Old Man," were well informed of what was going on. And, in time, the Americans had grown dependent on Palestinian intelligence and were respectful of Ramlawi's skills.

Sex, Terrorism, and Defeat

Early in the novel, the explanation for Ramlawi's obsessive sexuality—and, by extension, that of other Arabs—is based on his inability to effect real change in his environment. In the scene below, sexuality is tied to a sense of defeat. According to the author, Arabs need sex because they are a defeated people. The only way to argue with this logic is to reverse it: is it possible to say that Americans don't need sex because they are on the winning side? Sexuality and war have always been linked in psychoanalytic studies, but never quite in the same way as Ignatius proposes:

> Below him on Jaffa Street, Rogers saw a jeep fitted with a machine gun, careening up the street at breakneck speed. A dark-haired Palestinian commando stood in the back, legs apart and hips swaying with the motion of the vehicle, holding the trunk of the machine gun in his hands and rotating it on its turret. It was a sensual, almost erotic embrace of a deadly weapon, and it was an image that Rogers came to associate with the guerrillas; the posturing of a vain but ultimately powerless people.[45]

Terrorism is also explained on the basis of the Palestinian sense of powerlessness and defeat. Palestinians commit acts of "terrorism" because they like to know that others are fearful of their presence, a fact that gives them a false sense of control over their environment. In a conversation attributed to two top members of the PLO, the relationship between committing acts of "terrorism"

and the need to regain a sense of control over one's destiny is explained as follows:

> Do you know what I feel when I read in the newspaper about Palestinian terrorists who have hijacked airplanes and killed civilians? Or when I read that the Palestinians are cruel and ruthless and inhuman? Intellectually I am critical, of course, because Fatah's official line is to oppose international terrorist operations. But do you know what I feel in my heart and my stomach?...I feel proud! It makes me happy to know that they are afraid of us. I like to see the look of fear in people's eyes when I walk down the street. If I hear someone say behind my back, "Be careful of him! He is a madman! He is a killer!" I am happy for the rest of the day.[46]

Clearly, there is no scientific evidence to support the theory that Palestinians, or any other people, have excessive sexual urges. Or, for that matter, is there proof that Palestinians have a particular desire to seek fear in those they regard as "Other." Stereotyping of this nature is inaccurate. It creates a distorted image of the Palestinian and of all Arabs. In addition to perpetuating the image of the Arab as terrorist, it gives a new legitimacy to the old stereotype of the Arab as a lascivious sheikh. Whereas in the past this image was based on the Orientalist perception of the Arab world, now it has become justified on the basis of Arab defeat. One would have hoped that the author, who lived for several years in Lebanon, would have avoided such generalizations, particularly since this is one of the first novels to show the emergence of the Palestinian as a fully developed character, rather than a one-dimensional, stereotyped fiend.

Chapter 5

A Talk with the Angels
Islamic Terrorism

A Talk With the Angels, by Desmond Meiring,[47] is a political thriller about Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt. Meiring, a British writer, incorporates in the novel his research on Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The novel also contains quotations from Islamic texts. It is written in a language that purports to be objective and to present reality from the point of view of one of the fundamentalist leaders, Abbas Hakki. This character plots the assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, allegedly for turning the Egyptian people into pawns in the hands of Western governments.

Beneath this seeming objectivity, however, the novel contributes to the derogatory image of Arabs. Fundamentalists are described as fanatics with very little concern for human life or human suffering. Scenes of torture at their hands leave a lasting impression. Because the character of Gad, the moderate Arab Christian policeman, is too weak to offset that of Abbas or the other fundamentalists, the reader is left with the impression that most Arabs are violent and are fanatically committed to religious principles. Furthermore, the novel presents a very negative image of Arab women. The only female character belonging to the fundamentalist sect—called *Malaikat as-Sayf* (Angels of the Sword) and described on the cover as one of Egypt's most secret and savage fundamentalist sects—kills for sexual gratification. All other categories of women fare equally badly.

For conflicting reasons, three unlikely partners combine their efforts to assassinate President Mubarak and to promote Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt. Mainstree, a British oil company owner and financier, is motivated by higher profits. He believes that the spread of fundamentalism in the Middle East will bring a decline in oil production and that, in turn, will increase the demand for his

oil. Avraham Ben Yahuda is an Israeli extremist motivated by expansionism. He is opposed to peace with Egypt because it prevents his country from conquering more Arab territory. If the fundamentalists reach power, he believes, they are sure to break ties with Israel at which point Israel could conquer Egypt and expand. Wahid Hakki and Abbas Sidki, two members of *Malaikat as-Sayf*, would like to assassinate Mubarak because, in his pursuit of Sadat's policies, he has perpetrated an abomination on the Egyptian people. Hakki and Sidki base their plan on the Koran, which teaches that it is the duty of a good Muslim to eradicate such an abomination: "Whosoever amongst you sees an abomination, he must correct it with his hands; if he is unable, then with his tongue; if he is unable, then with his heart."[48] In general, this statement sets the tone for the entire novel. Muslims who follow the preachings of the Koran must resort to violence in pursuit of what is perceived to be just.

An Israeli intelligence officer and a Christian Egyptian policeman constitute the moderate camp fighting the *Malaika*. In a rare display of unity between Israeli and Arab extremists versus Israeli and Arab moderates, the novel breaks with the traditional way of depicting Arabs as "bad guys" and Israelis as "good guys." The exchange of information between Gad, the Egyptian intelligence agent, and Allon, his Israeli counterpart, prevents the assassination of Mubarak and the American president. But this blurring of the lines that traditionally separate Arabs and Jews falls short of a real breakthrough in altering the Arab stereotype. The *Malaika*, and through them all Arabs, emerge as sadistic torturers.

Violence and Torture

Scenes of violence and torture, though graphic, are described in a highly anesthetized way. The reader of thrillers has become somewhat jaded to images of splattering blood and general gore. Meiring works against these images: first, by keeping violence to a minimum of one torture scene, two killings, and one suicide; and second, by describing these scenes in the same detached way a doc-

tor might describe an operation. He therefore succeeds in shocking the reader with the violence attributed to fundamentalists. One scene even goes so far as to illustrate, on a symbolic level, the relationship between religion and torture for the fundamentalists. The members of a cell make their victims suffer to the words of a religious song, "The Guide was Born and All Creation was Radiant," performed by Um Kulthum. The song drowns the screams of a former member of the cell who betrayed the group, as the torturers apply a burning cigarette first to his private parts and then to his eyes. The reader is both shocked and appalled by the graphic description of the way in which the skin puffs up and the redness forms around the eye. The underlying message is that Islam condones torture as long as it is done in the interest of furthering the principles to which the fundamentalists adhere.

In addition to torture, suicide is a common practice among Muslims in this novel. Another powerful scene involves the suicide of a member of the cell who lets himself be run over by a tram because he is afraid of divulging information to the police:

> When Gad and his companions reached the tramlines, the body of the black-bearded chemist lay before them like a lesson in anatomy. The two legs had been sliced off precisely just below the knees and were ranged neatly parallel. The headless torso, still pumping out blood mildly from either end, lay in the same exact line. Only the head had moved. The eyes were open and bulging a little above the broken nose, and the lips were set in a rictus. You might even, Daniel Gad supposed, have called it a smile.[49]

Meiring's ability to portray violence in a way that can still capture the attention of the most seasoned reader is utilized here to show that Muslims are a violent people who think nothing of inflicting pain or death on themselves and others. This image of the Arab is based, in the mind of the reader, on a division of the world into two camps: "us" (Western society) and "them" (Arab society), as implied in the narrative, in which the self, or the reader, is

defined against the perceived violence of the Arab. In other words, the Western reader feels that his or her culture provides a degree of security against the kinds of violence that dominate "those Arab countries." Perhaps inadvertently, these scenes of violence serve to reinforce the notion that the Arabs are a people not like "us" and hence more prone to barbarism and wanton violence.

Arab Women

In addition to violence, sex also is an important component of the stereotype of the fundamentalist. However, since it is hardly possible to portray the fundamentalist as sexually obsessed (in the manner that the Arab is presented in *Agents of Innocence*, for example), a certain reversal takes place. Here the sublimation of sex becomes the focal point of attention and is used to explain the motive behind the urge for violence. Interestingly, the sublimation of the sexual drive that leads the fundamentalist to kill is attributed to the only woman in the cell.

Zeinab Marzuk, a beautiful and shapely woman, joins the *Malaika* as a consequence of being disappointed with her American husband for having a mistress, rather than out of a sense of commitment to the principles of Islam. When her Bostonian husband explains that having a mistress or two is a common way of life for a man of his means and position, Zeinab, a Harvard graduate in sociology, expresses her vindictiveness and anger against all Americans by returning to Egypt to join the *Malaika*. The author concludes that while Zeinab was "arguing politics from the vagina," she was very committed to her fanatic approach.

Once in the cell, Zeinab shows no ability to be motivated by principles, but she falls ardently in love with Abbas, the cell leader. Since she is unable to consummate this love, her sexual frustration is released through the act of killing. After robbing a jewelry store, she gratuitously kills the owner although he was already gagged and could be relied upon not to speak to the

authorities out of fear. The scene draws a correlation with the sexual act:

> She clamped her body down closely over his, her crotch tight down over his, snug below the pot belly...A sudden final climax galvanized him. She straddled him close, bouncing identically with him. Now the great ecstatic warmth flowed beautifully about her arched loins, "Abbas," she shouted silently. "I do it all for Abbas!"[50]

In short, the above passage transfers two ideas to the reader. First, the sexual frustration of fundamentalists constitutes the urge to kill or be killed. In this form, the excessive sexual drive attributed to the Arab can be explained, even though in reality, fundamentalists express a great degree of sexual control. Second, women are incapable of commitment to a cause and can only be committed to a man. The book is replete with statements of a similar sexist nature such as, "She had popped babies out for him for four years with machinegun regularity."[51] It is not surprising, therefore, to read on the cover that *Playboy* magazine recommends this book.

There are three additional female types representing Egyptian women, but all fall short of meeting the qualities of Bridget, the fully liberated and totally satisfying Western woman. First there is Um Samir, the maid. Although she is described in most sympathetic terms, she is presented as "having a true Egyptian's deep sense of fellowship with dirt." Then there is Magda, whom Gad had loved before his relationship with Bridget. It was a kind of platonic love that ended because he could not determine whether he and Magda were suited to one another. He concludes that Egyptian women are brought up to be an appendage of men, and not full companions to them. He asserts that they are merely sexual vessels. Certainly a large segment of Egyptian women might not recognize themselves in this generalization.

The third caricature of a woman is Gad's neighbor:

> She was an Arab lady of the Egyptian lower-middle class, who had achieved to perfection that high ideal of total female self-effacement decreed by the most puritanical and exigent of that cultural level. As Gad knew, some ninety per cent of all Egyptian-Moslem women were still circumcised. This Arab lady could have been the high priestess of that cult of fervently willed and dedicated sexual insipidity.[52]

The problem with all the female characters is that they never achieve the depth or the vitality of Bridget; they remain as stereotypes, probably because the author knows little about Egyptian women. That stereotype pales before the believable character of Bridget, conferring on Arab women a facelessness based on the author's ignorance.

In her article on Arab stereotyping, Kathleen Christison asserts that Meiring treats Islam with an unusual degree of understanding: "The reader is made to understand why Abbas Sidki takes up the crusade he does and why most Muslims cannot tolerate the excesses of fundamentalism."[53] I have found, however, that the novel conveys a totally different message when one takes a closer look at the images of its Arab characters. Meiring clearly has resorted to employing the plethora of readily available stereotypes, and has failed to produce a new way of looking either at the Arab world or at Islamic fundamentalism.

Notes

1. See Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV Arab* (Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1984, p. 12), for further information on the impact of the civil rights movement on television.
2. Edmund Ghareeb, editor, *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media* (Washington D.C.: Arab-American Affairs Council, 1983, p. 8).
3. Ibid., p. xv.
4. Ibid., p. 19. Ghareeb attributes the media's failure to cover the Middle East fairly to five major reasons: 1. cultural bias; 2. the "think alike" atmosphere; 3. the Arab-Israeli conflict; 4. media ignorance of the origins and history of the conflict; and 5. the determined, sophisticated Israeli lobby.
5. Leon Uris, *The Haj* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).
6. Ibid. It is important to note that Leon Uris never uses the word Palestinian; characters are referred to only as Arabs.
7. John Le Carre, *The Little Drummer Girl* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).
8. David Ignatius, *Agents Of Innocence* (New York: Norton and Company, 1987).
9. For further information on stereotyping in *The Little Drummer Girl*, see Janice J. Terry, *Mistaken Identity: Arab Stereotypes in Popular Writing* (Washington D.C.: Arab-American Affairs Council, 1985), p. 105.
10. Desmond Meiring, *A Talk With The Angels* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).
11. Jere Maudsley, *Hunter* (New York: Jove Books, 1987).
12. For further information on the influence of *Exodus* on other novels, see Janice J. Terry, *Mistaken Identity: Arab Stereotypes in Popular Writing*.
13. Kathleen Christison, "The Arab in Recent Popular Fiction," *Journal of Middle East Studies*, Winter, 1987, p. 407.
14. Isaac Yetiv, *Holy Land Holy War* (New York: Vantage Press, 1979).
15. For the four main stereotypes seen on television, see Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV Arab* (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), pp. 13-20.
16. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 5.
17. Ibid.
18. Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973).

19. John Laffin, *The Arab Mind Considered: A Need for Understanding* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1976).
20. Sania Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arabs* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960).
21. Ayad Al-Qazzaz, "Images of the Arab in American Social Science Text Books," in *Arabs in America: Myths and Realities*, edited by Baha Abu-Laban and Faith T. Zeadey (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1975. Distributed by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Belmont, MA), p. 113.
22. Citing *The New York Times*, September 8, 1983, Terry writes: "the number of books published in the United States alone has increased from 11,000 annually in 1950 to 50,000 in 1983." See Janice J. Terry, *Mistaken Identity: Arab Stereotypes in Popular Writing*, p. 2.
23. Ibid., p. 5.
24. Christison, p. 407.
25. Uris, p. 6.
26. Ibid., p. 5.
27. Ibid., p. 262.
28. Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948* (Beirut, Lebanon: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978) pp. 102-103.
29. Uris, p. 261
30. Ibid., pp. 261-262.
31. Christopher Hitchens, "Broadcasts," in *Blaming The Victims*, edited by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (New York: Verso Books, 1988).
32. Uris, p. 107.
33. Ibid., p. 5.
34. Ibid., p. 6.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 10.
37. Jere Maudsley, *Hunter* (New York: Jove Books, 1985).
38. Ibid., p. 1.
39. Ibid., p. 2.
40. Ibid., p. 4.
41. Ibid., p. 170.
42. Ibid., p. 184.
43. Ibid., p. 164.
44. Ibid., p. 401.

45. Ibid., p. 104.
46. Ibid., p. 291.
47. Desmond Meiring, *A Talk With The Angels* (Reprint. New York: World Wide, 1987).
48. Ibid., p. 11.
49. Ibid., p. 56.
50. Ibid., p. 160.
51. Ibid., p. 84.
52. Ibid.
53. Christison, p. 407.

Other Novels about Arabs

[An Annotated Bibliography]

Aricha, Amos and Eli Landau, *Phoenix*, New York: Signet, 1979. The Libyans hire a Westerner to assassinate Moshe Dayan. But the would-be assassin becomes an admirer of Israeli know-how and is repulsed by the ineptitude of the Arabs.

Bar-Zohar, Michael and Eitan Haber, *The Quest for The Red Prince*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985. This novel is listed in libraries as a factual biography of the life of Hassan Salameh, the PLO's CIA contact gunned down by Mossad in 1972 for his alleged involvement with Black September. But the work reads like a novel and no sources are listed for any of the information obtained.

Black, Lionel, *Arafat is Next!*, New York: Stein and Day, 1975. Black is a pseudonym for an English biographer. The plot deals with the attempted assassination of Arafat by British agents in retaliation for the death of one of their friends killed by a bomb set by Palestinians. The novel portrays Israelis as superior while Arabs are bumbling fools.

Charles, Robert, *A Clash of Hawks*, New York: Pinnacle Books, 1975. The novel is about the Arab-Israeli conflict. The author perceives the Palestinian resistance and Islamic *jihad* to be one and the same. Within this context the Arabs are waging a holy war against Israel, but Israel wins the day because it has the atomic bomb and is militarily superior.

Clarkson, Geoffrey, *Jihad*, New York: Tom Doherty, distributed by Pinnacle, 1981. Islam is waging a holy war against the West, only this time the weapon is money. Arabs and Iranians unite and form a conspiracy that poses a threat to the world economy. Islam and the West are portrayed as eternal enemies.

Collins, Larry, and Dominique Lapierre, *The Fifth Horseman*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980. The plot is based on a situation where Kaddafi threatens to start a nuclear war. The novel was an immediate success and made it to the bestseller list.

Coppel, Alfred, *The Apocalypse Brigade*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981; Charter Books, 1983. The issue here is oil and the attempt by the United States to disrupt its production and to replace it with a synthetic product. The villains are Saudis and Palestinians and every negative stereotype attributed to Arabs is revived in this novel.

Dan, Uri with Edward Radley, *The Eichmann Syndrome*, New York: Leisure Books, 1977. The novel is primarily about the tracking down of a Nazi. However,

the plot also portrays Arabs as anti-Semites interested in bringing about a new Holocaust.

Erdman, Paul E., *The Crash of '79*, New York: Pocket Books, 1976. The plot centers on the Arab oil embargo and the craftiness of the Arabs in money matters. The Arabs are portrayed as evil human beings motivated by a desire to rob the West. The stereotype is that of a lazy yet manipulative and unimaginative people.

Follett, Ken, *Triple*, New York: Arbor House/Signet, 1980. The novel is based in part on the Israeli theft of uranium from the United States. It sets out to justify the right of Israel to develop a nuclear bomb while, at the same time, disputing the Egyptians' right to develop atomic weapons. Mossad, with the help of some European allies, finally prevents the Arabs from developing the "Arab bomb." The novel was on the bestseller list.

Follett, Ken, *On Wings of Eagles*, New York: Morrow, 1983. The plot deals with Iran after the revolution. Iranians are portrayed as incompetent and incapable of running the country. Their intelligence level is well below that of the Americans.

Frankel, Sandor and Webster Mews, *The Aleph Solution*, New York: Stein and Day, 1978. The Palestinians plan to take over the United Nations and hold the world hostage. A brave Israeli foils the plan and saves the world.

Goldreich, Gloria, *This Burning Harvest*, New York: Berkeley Books, 1983. The novel deals with a love affair between a Palestinian and Israeli. The hero, Achmed, falls in love with an Israeli woman and the affair ends tragically, thereby making the point that romantic relations between Arabs and Jews cannot succeed, and therefore should not be pursued.

Haddad, C.A., *The Moroccan*, New York: Harper and Row, 1976; Bantam, 1978. This is a thriller featuring a number of sex scenes that depict the Arabs as barbaric villains.

Harel, Isser, *Jihada*, London: Corgi, 1978. The Palestinians are interested in bringing about an all-out war between the Saudis and the Israelis. Towards this objective they set out to bomb Mecca from an Israeli jet. Israeli intelligence is in on the plot all along and manages to abort the plan before any damage is done.

Harris, Leonard, *The Masada Plan*, New York: Popular Library, 1978. This is one of many novels dealing with the possibility of touching off a nuclear disaster as a result of the Middle East conflict. As the title "Masada" suggests, Israel is so determined to survive that it is willing to blow up several nuclear bombs strategically placed in several capitals. But the novel is written in a tone that requires the world to be understanding and sympathetic to the predicament of Israel.

Ignatius, David, *Agents of Innocence*, New York: Norton and Company, 1987. This is a tale of espionage involving the contact between the CIA and the PLO in Lebanon. Tom Rogers is the CIA agent posted in Beirut to penetrate the PLO. Instead, the PLO and the CIA come to work together until the assassination of PLO agent Ramlawi by the Mossad.

Irving, Clive, *Promise the Earth*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1983. This book describes British policy in the Middle East after World War I and tends to support the Zionist interpretation of history.

Kaplan, Howard, *The Damascus Cover*, New York: Fawcett Crest Books, 1977. The novel is about the inhumanity of the Syrians in particular and the Arabs in general. In the process, many statements are made about the sexual appetite of Arabs.

Kaplan, Howard, *Bullets of Palestine*, New York: World Wide, 1987. By the author of *The Damascus Cover*. Israeli and Palestinian agents act together to catch Abu Nidal, who is gunning down Jews in Europe in order to discredit the PLO. An Israeli agent is dispatched to Europe to locate Abu Nidal. The Palestinian is only a helper in this unequal relationship.

Le Carre, John, *The Little Drummer Girl*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983. The plot revolves around a complex scheme by Israeli intelligence agents to capture two Palestinian brothers known to have planted several homemade bombs that killed a number of Jews in Germany. It is one of the few novels to portray the Arab-Israeli conflict in a correct historical context.

Maudsley, Jere, *Hunter*, New York: Jove Books, 1985. Kaddafi wants to develop an atomic bomb in order to destroy Israel. Hunter, a Viet Nam veteran, is recruited by Israeli intelligence to set a trap for the Canadians who are furnishing Kaddafi with the necessary materials. Kaddafi and all Arabs are portrayed as back stabbers who enjoy violence for its own sake. The Arabs described are physically repulsive and ugly. Few books can match the negative image of the Arab portrayed here.

McInerny, Ralph, *Lying There*, New York: Charter, 1979. The language is replete with racial slurs against Arabs and Moslems. It deals with terrorists in a way that attributes the motives of terrorism to the tribal nature of Arabs.

Meiring, Desmond, *A Talk With The Angels*, New York: A Gold Eagle Book from Worldwide, 1987. Moslem fundamentalists, Israeli rightists, and a British capitalist join in a conspiracy to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, each one for a different reason. But the book focuses mainly on the violent excesses of Islamic fundamentalism.

Melman, Yossi, *The Master Terrorist*, New York: Avon Books, 1987. Advertised as the true story of Abu Nidal (Sabri Al-Banna), the author claims that the novel is based on information derived from CIA and Mossad reports. The theme posits Abu Nidal in a struggle against both Israel and the Arab people. A team of Palestinians led by Israelis seeks to catch and destroy Abu Nidal. Except for the positive step taken in portraying some Israelis and Palestinians working together to stop terrorism, the book suffers from all the usual negative portrayals of Palestinians.

Osmond, Andrew, *Saladin*, New York: Doubleday, 1976; Bantam, 1979. Saladin is the code name for a terrorist operation conducted by Palestinians within Israel. The objective is to blow up the Israeli intelligence building, but the protagonist is caught and the mission is aborted.

Portugali, Menachem, *Khamsin*, London: MacDonald Future, 1981. The novel is set in Saudi Arabia where the "bad guys" are Saudis and Russians. The Arab is portrayed as all that the Israeli is not; the novel attributes all positive traits to the Israelis.

Riis, David Allen, *The Jerusalem Conspiracy*, New York: Dell/Bryans Books, 1979. The plot centers on "terrorist" attacks and the means used by Israel to repel these attacks. The characters consist of numerous Israeli female agents, all described as beautiful, brave, and intelligent.

Saudray, Nicolas, *The House of the Prophets*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985. The life of Moslems and Christians in the Arab city of Marsania is threatened by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. The book focuses on intransigence in fundamentalist thought.

Smith, Maggie, *The Sheik*, New York: Fawcett Crest, 1977. The novel features a mixed bag of rich Arabs, images of harems, Moslem fanatics, etc. It describes the life and character of the richest man in the world. The language is full of racial slurs.

Stein, Benjamin and Herbert Stein, *On the Brink*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1977. OPEC countries decide to raise the price of oil without any consideration for the ensuing economic disaster which befalls the United States. Oil prices cause world inflation and Americans must struggle in order to survive. The Moslem world is depicted as the culprit interested in destroying Israel and the United States.

Sugar, Andrew, *Israeli Commandos: The Alps Assignment*, New York: Manor Books, 1975. The action-filled plot revolves around Arabs as "bad guys" and Israelis who are noble and courageous. The novel is replete with scenes of sex and violence.

Trevanian, *Shibumi*, New York: Random House, 1979; Ballantine, 1985. The plot involves Arab merchants. The Arab is perceived as a greedy sexual maniac. The novel was on the bestseller list.

About the Author

Suha J. Sabbagh teaches courses in literature and women's studies at colleges in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. She holds a B.A. in education from the University of Northern Colorado and a PhD. in comparative literature from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

She has written numerous articles on gender in the Palestinian novel, and on the image of Arabs in Israeli popular fiction. Raised in Haifa, she was exposed at an early age to the way in which the native Arab population perceived itself, and the way in which they were perceived as "Other" by the Jewish population. This experience is brought to bear in her current study of "The Image of Arabs in American Popular Fiction."

Sabbagh is currently the executive director of the newly formed Institute for Arab Women's Studies in Washington, D.C.

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